



An Informational Briefing

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre
and Gunnison National Forests

September 2011



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The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests – A History

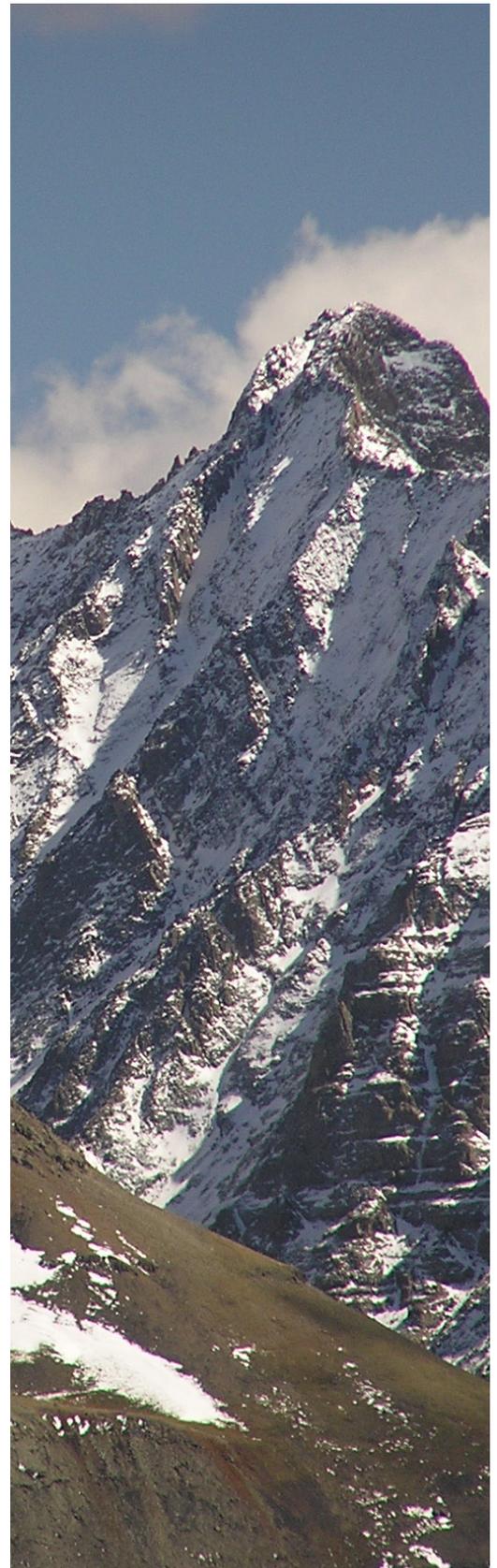
The GMUG is comprised of three individual national forests that are administered as a single unit from the Forest Supervisor's Office in Delta, CO. However, this was not always the case. The Grand Mesa and Uncompahgre were joined in 1954, and the Gunnison was added in 1973. The earliest segment of the Forests, dubbed the Battlement Mesa Forest Reserve, was established in 1892.

Today, the three forests total 2.9 million acres, and approximately 3.4 million visitors experience recreation activities on the forests annually including downhill skiing, snowmobiling, hunting, hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, backcountry camping, and off-highway vehicle use.

The forests span nine counties, including Mesa, Delta, Montrose, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Ouray, San Miguel, Saguache and Garfield.

Forest Facts for Fiscal Year 2011

Headquarters	2250 Highway 50 Delta, CO 81416
Number of employees	151 permanent employees 123 temporary employees in recreation and wilderness, timber, fire management and road maintenance
Number of ranger districts	5 (Grand Valley, Ouray, Paonia, Norwood and Gunnison)
Elevations	From approximately 6,000 feet to over 14,000 feet above sea level
Wildernesses	10 – Fossil Ridge, Powderhorn, LaGarita, Mt. Sneffels, Uncompahgre, Raggeds, West Elk, Lizardhead (The GMUG shares three Wildernesses with the White River National Forest. They are the Collegiate Peaks, The Raggeds and Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wildernesses.)
Potentially “Eligible” Wild and Scenic Rivers	Oh-Be-Joyful segments A and C and D, Slate River, West Elk Creek, Upper West Elk Creek, Tabeguache Creek, Cow Creek, Wetterhorn Creek, Wildhorse Creek, Dry Fork Escalante, Bear Creek, Lower Taylor River, Bridal Veil Falls, Ingram Falls
National Scenic or Historic Trails	Crag Crest National Scenic Trail upper and lower loop, Bear Creek National Scenic Trail, Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, American Discovery Trail, Old Spanish National Historic Trail
Scenic Byways	West Elk Scenic Byway, San Juan All American Byway (Skyway), Unaweep-Tabeguache Scenic Byway, Grand Mesa Scenic Byway, Silver Thread Scenic Byway, Alpine Loop Backcountry Byway



Recreating in the Great Outdoors

Recreation opportunities are varied, and millions of visitors come to the GMUG to enjoy:

- Three ski resorts, four lodges, two organizational camps, one marina
- More than 58 campgrounds and 13 picnic areas
- 3,731 miles of system roads
- 3,531 miles of trails (hiking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, etc.)
- More than 300 lakes
- 3,600 miles of streams
- Roughly 150 permitted outfitters and guides
- A variety of historic mining sites, including the San Juan Mining Area, as well as the Alpine Tunnel Historic District that includes approximately 13 miles of the former Denver, South Park and Pacific Railroad railbed across the Continental Divide.
- Six mountain peaks over 14,000 feet
- The GMUG added Cabin Rentals to its variety of recreation experiences afforded to citizens. Six cabin rental units are available for reservation, Silesca, Black Bear Manor, Moose Manor, Aspen Leaf, Oak and Jackson Guard Station, with others planned for future rental opportunities.

Heritage Resources

The Heritage Resources program has been active in 2011. The Forest continued enhancement on two ARRA projects by developing interpretive signing for the Alpine Tunnel Historic District and improving the entrance area, information kiosk, parking area and walkways. In addition, the locomotive house ruins were cemented and stabilized. Likewise, the 1912 Alpine Ranger Station was restored and outfitted with a solar energy system to operate the station.

Volunteers worked with the Forest to re-roof the 1912 Fairview Peak Ranger Station (13,700 feet in elevation!). This work prepared the site for next year's continued restoration efforts. Volunteers also performed site monitoring on three historic districts.

The Forest entered into a partnership with the Ouray County Historical Society to repair the roof at the Neosho Mine, a charming 1920's cabin clinging to the side of the canyon on the Million Dollar Highway above Ouray, CO. A partnership with San Miguel County helped stabilize Fort Peabody, near the Imogene Pass jeep road, where snipers were hired by the mines in 1906 and stationed to watch for union organizers approaching Telluride.

The Forest contracted with the Museum of Western Colorado to card and catalogue twenty boxes of artifacts collected from the past 35 years of surveys and excavations. Additionally, in 2011 5000 acres were surveyed resulting in approximately 50 archaeological finds and reports to the Colorado SHPO office.





Wildlife Species of Interest

The GMUG is host to a variety of flora and fauna, including populations of approximately 55,000 elk, 143,000 deer, 520 Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep and 150 desert bighorn sheep. The GMUG is also home to a moose herd on the Grand Mesa, with a population of more than 150.

Federal threatened and endangered species on the Forest include:

- Canada lynx
- Mexican spotted owl
- Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly
- Uinta Basin hookless cactus

Special species the GMUG plays a role in helping to sustain:

- Gunnison sage grouse
- Boreal Owl
- Bald Eagle
- Black bear
- Pine Marten
- Peregrine Falcon
- Several plant species
- Mountain Lion



Aquatic sensitive species on or near the Forest include:

- Colorado River cutthroat trout
- Roundtail chub
- Bluehead sucker
- Boreal toad
- Green cutthroat trout

The GMUG provides most of the available habitat for the Colorado River cutthroat trout and the boreal toad in southwestern Colorado.

Wildlife and Fish Habitat

Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat restoration and enhancement is a key activity on the GMUG. In 2011 approximately 60 miles of road were closed on the Norwood, Ouray, Paonia and Gunnison Ranger Districts. Closures focused on areas with historic travel management conflicts and within key wildlife habitats including Gunnison sage-grouse and big game winter range. Closures enhanced over 19,000 acres of wildlife habitat.

Managed (naturally ignited and managed to achieve resource objectives) and prescribed fire was used to enhance habitat on an additional 2,500 acres on the south end of the Uncompahgre Plateau, and in Taylor Canyon. Mechanical treatments were also completed on 150 acres of Pinion-juniper on the North end of the Uncompahgre Plateau using hydro-axe equipment.

Surveys and monitoring were conducted for several management indicator, threatened and endangered, and sensitive species including Abert's squirrel, goshawk, American marten, bighorn sheep, Gunnison Sage-grouse, Colorado River, greenback cutthroat trout, and Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly.

Two longer-term monitoring efforts were initiated in 2011 to address management concerns. The first study establishes baseline water temperatures on representative streams on the Forest in cooperation with Utah State



University. The three-year study is intended to provide the Forest with valuable data to model effects of climate change on stream temperatures.

A second study is a two year study examining bighorn sheep distribution, habitat use and potential interaction with domestic sheep was initiated in the S-21 Data Analysis Unit (DAU). Telemetry and satellite data is being collected from ten wild sheep and two domestic sheep (one per band). Results will be used to complete development of Forest-level habitat maps and domestic sheep risk assessment in 2012.

Culvert inventory was completed on the Gunnison and Paonia Ranger districts. Culverts were inspected for aquatic organism passage and floodplain function issues. Federal highways funds were obtained to replace two stream crossings determined not to provide aquatic organism passage. Culverts at both crossings (Little Muddy Creek and Clear Fork Muddy Creek) are being replaced with low-water fords.

The challenge cost share continued with the Division of Park and Wildlife to perform inspection of watercraft for Aquatic Nuisance Species on Taylor Park Reservoir. Crews were stationed at the boat ramp from 0500 to 2200 hours, seven days a week.

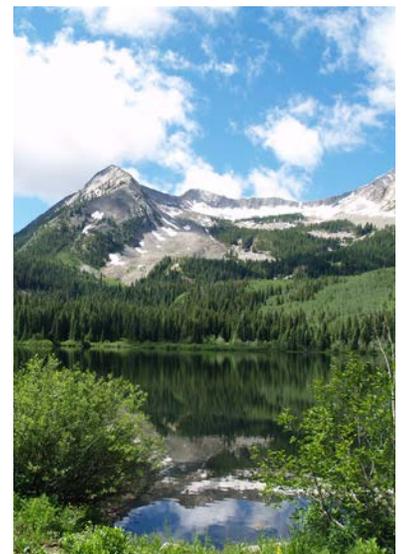
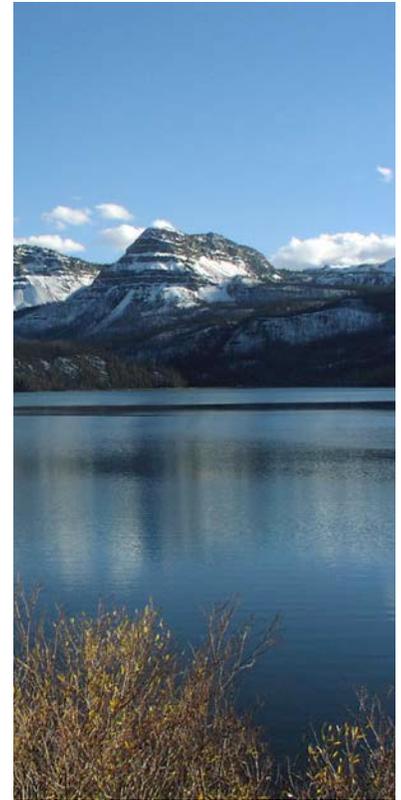
2011 was the first year of a Science and Engineering Apprenticeship Program for the GMUG as part of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project (CFLRP) grant. Two students were selected to help with a Riparian Monitoring project on the north end of the Uncompahgre Plateau. The students gathered and analyzed data and then gave a presentation to the FLT. In addition, the student also job shadowed multiple Forest Service employees for six weeks.

In September, the GMUG worked with the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife to chemically treat two tributaries to Woods Lake and the reservoir itself to remove non-native fish. Once it is determined that all non native have be removed, native cutthroat will be put back to raise and help in restoration efforts. A challenge cost share agreement was implemented with Bear Ranch LLC and the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to construct a barrier on Deep Creek. The barrier will prevent non-native species from moving upstream into greenback cutthroat trout habitat. The material was purchased by the Forest Service using project monies and a grant provided by the FWS. The barrier was designed by the Forest Service engineers and fabricated and installed by Bear Ranch personnel

In 2011, our partners contributed approximately \$205,000 to projects benefitting wildlife, fish and rare plants resources.

Water Resources

Approximately 2.8 million acre-feet of runoff is generated annually from the GMUG, supporting approximately 3,600 miles of perennial streams and supplying about 11,650 surface acres of lakes and reservoirs. Water yield from the Forest provides water for both surface and groundwater drinking sources, a large number of agricultural and recreational uses, and supports cool and cold-water fisheries including rainbow, brown, brook and Colorado River cutthroat trout.





The Forest has a variety of forested and non-forested riparian areas and wetlands (approximately 100,000 acres total) and additional acreage associated with lakes and reservoirs occurring over a wide range of ecological settings.

The most prominent values sustained by water originating on the GMUG include drinking and agricultural water supplies, as well as aquatic threatened, endangered and sensitive species and their habitats.

The GMUG completed its Fen Inventory and is working on the final report to be released later in the 2011 calendar year. Fens are “peat accumulating wetlands” and are unique wetlands in the region because of their presence in the southern latitudes of the GMUG.

The GMUG Watershed staff participates in the activities and planning on three local watershed coalitions as well as serving as the Forest Service liaisons to both the Colorado River and Gunnison River Roundtable committees.

In January 2011 the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) approved new in-stream flow appropriations for three streams on the GMUG- Tabeguache Creek, Red Canyon Creek and the North Fork Tabeguache Creek. The decisions were based on recommendations by the Forest Service and these stream flow appropriations provide baseline flow protection for aquatic species in these streams.



A team of Forest resource specialists completed the National Watershed Condition Classification and Climax Change Vulnerability Assessment on watersheds within the GMUG boundaries. Of the 231 watersheds classified on the GMUG, 156 watersheds were rated as good and 75 were classified as fair; none are considered in poor condition. The watersheds in good condition account for about 58 percent of the acreage within the GMUG boundaries. These assessments were used by watershed managers to identify priority watersheds on the Forest. The GMUG has identified Marshall Creek as our priority watershed for fiscal year 2012 watershed restoration efforts.

Travel management implementation is a key component of watershed restoration. For FY 2011, most of the restoration effort is associated with the closure and restoration of unneeded roads and trails identified in the 2010 Gunnison Travel Management decision. Over 210 acres of restoration was accomplished this year, with more planned in the ensuing years. Full implementation of the Gunnison Travel Plan will take 3-5 years.

Forest Management and Timber

In 2011, the GMUG planned and accomplished a variety of forest vegetation management projects that were designed to improve or maintain forest health and resiliency while also providing forest products for personal-use as well as to support the local forest products industry. Increasing spruce beetle and budworm populations are continuing to cause tree mortality, resulting in change to the conditions and appearance of the forest. Various root diseases and Sudden Aspen Decline (SAD) are also affecting the health of forest trees. Managers planned and accomplished the following projects to restore or improve healthy forest conditions:

- Administration of 18 large commercial multi-year timber sale contracts with



104,000 ccf of volume under contract on 9,000 acres of planned treatments; including administration of three large Stewardship Service contracts (IRSC) with 19,000 ccf of volume under contract on 2,000 acres of planned treatments. Large sales accounted for about 5,000 ccf of volume harvested on 435 acres in FY2011. (A “ccf” is a unit of measure of wood that is called a “cunit” and it equals 100 cubic feet of solid wood.)

- Administration of 18 small single-year commercial timber sale contracts with a harvest volume of 11,000 ccf on 957 acres of planned treatments.
- Combined harvest of 16,000 ccf of sawtimber, fuelwood, and biomass volume on about 1,392 acres.
- Preparation, offer, and award of 31,343 ccf of green and dead sawtimber, fuelwood and biomass volume encompassing 3,466 acres of planned treatment; including award of Sawmill Mesas Stewardship Service contract with 12,700 ccf of sawtimber and biomass product on 1,270 acres of treatment, and 1,200 acres of additional fuels treatment.
- Preparation and administration of 300+ commercial, personal-use, and free-use permits, including firewood, post & poles, Christmas trees, limbs, boughs, transplants, mushrooms, and other special forest products.
- Ongoing environmental (NEPA) planning on 15,000 acres of commercial timber and biomass harvesting and 35,000 acres of hazardous vegetation removal over the next five years.
- 1,053 acres of integrated forest vegetation improvement and hazardous fuels treatment, including a combination of chainsaw, heavy equipment use, and prescribed burning treatment methods to maintain health and vigor.
- 725 acres of targeted forest health protection treatments to reduce impacts from bark beetles and other insects and pathogens.
- 11,500 acres of forest health protection pre-treatment surveys and 1,000 acres of post-treatment monitoring.
- 508 acres of pre-treatment exams for reforestation.
- 559 acres of tree planting in the Beaver and Burn Canyon Burn areas.
- 103 acres of site preparation for natural forest regeneration.
- 222 acres of certification of natural forest regeneration with site preparation.
- 29 acres of reforestation animal damage control.
- 986 acres of reforestation monitoring.
- 600 acres of tree shelter removal.
- 125 acres of pre-commercial thinning in young, forested stands to maintain health and vigor.
- 112 acres of tree release and weeding in young, forested stands to maintain health and vigor.
- 19 acres of timber sale activity brush disposal.
- 110 acre Telski ski area project design and implementation.
- Conducted field reviews with the Uncompahgre Plateau Collaborative, the Burn Canyon Monitoring Collaborative, and the Southern Rocky Mountain Ecoregion Consortium.



Rangeland Management and Noxious Weed Control

The GMUG provides 159 active grazing allotments to 226 permittees (ranches) in Colorado. About 57,500 cattle, 277 horses and 26,700 sheep were permitted to graze on approximately 2.6 million acres of the GMUG in FY 2011. The Forest



managed 608,000 acres of grazing to standard and improved range vegetation on 42,500 acres. Additionally, 2,336 acres on the Forest were treated to eliminate noxious weeds, with about 1,420 of these acres accomplished through local partnerships, grants and agreements, and 80% accomplished with a mix of appropriated and trust funds. Despite treatment efforts across the Forest, field inventories illustrate expansion of several noxious weed species such as sulfur cinquefoil, diffuse knapweed and oxeye daisy in 2011.

Land Acquisition and Ditch Bill

The GMUG has worked extensively to acquire key lands within the Forest. The Forest has a continuing acquisition program utilizing the Land and Water Conservation Program, monies and the Land Exchange processes. The Forest is working to acquire approximately, 1000 acres of land in the Red Mountain Pass area. These lands are important mining claims located at or near timberline and are adjacent to previous acquisitions of almost 9,000 acres of patented mining claims. This case is anticipated to close by the end of the year.

In 2011, the Forest negotiated a trail easement from a local landowner to provide public access to Wilson Peak, a 14-er in the San Juan Mountains. Trail access had been closed by this landowner for seven years. Along with the newly acquired easement, the Forest reconstructed the access road, constructed a new trailhead that has room for overnight camping and constructed a new trail to the Rock of Ages pass, just below Wilson Peak. The project was done in partnership with the Trust for Public Lands, San Miguel County and Telluride Mountain Club.

The Forest continues to process the remaining nine Ditch Bill easements and anticipates completion by the end of the calendar year. The GMUG started with 525 applications and has processed 516 cases to date.

Energy and Minerals

The GMUG cooperates with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Colorado Division of Reclamation Mining and Safety (DRMS) and the federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM) to manage the operations of three underground coal mines in the North Fork Valley. The mines extract coal from federal coal leases under the national forest. Production from these mines represents about 40% of the coal mined in the state.

The GMUG had the responsibility to evaluate various coal mining related uses of the forest, and responded to the DRMS with conditions for use of NFS lands on six coal mining permit actions ranging from exploration drilling, ventilation shaft reclamation, water monitoring, and methane drainage. The GMUG completed compliance inspections on over 100 coal-related surface facilities; and progressed on two coal lease modifications and five roadless project consultations.

The GMUG continues to participate in the North Fork Coal Working Group, a 10-year-old community collaborative group which addresses coal issues in the North Fork Valley.



The GMUG also manages surface-use associated with natural gas development. Currently the Forest has twenty-one natural gas wells operated by seven natural gas companies. The GMUG participates in a Natural Gas Collaborative Group hosted by Delta County, that includes representatives from local counties, environmental interests industry, private landowners and the BLM. GMUG minerals administrators presented gas program information at public forums hosted by local environmental interests.

The GMUG, in cooperation with the BLM, prepared an environmental analysis on potential leasing of about 3,700 acres of land for geothermal development.

In 2011, compliance inspections were performed on ten existing locatable minerals operations. The GMUG administers about thirty mineral material sites, which provide sources of rock, sand and gravel for in-service use, local counties, other agencies, and landscaping rock for the general public.

The GMUG began processing a locatable minerals plan of operation submitted by Tomichi Resources, LLC, a U.S. subsidiary of Burnstone Ventures of Vancouver, British Columbia for the drilling of nine exploratory holes for copper and molybdenum northeast of Whitepine, CO.

In coordination with the State of Colorado, Division of Reclamation, Safety and Mining (DRMS) the GMUG worked on developing closure contracts for hazardous openings near the Augusta Mountain area on the Gunnison Ranger District and the stabilization contract for the Lower McIntyre Gulch Mine on the Ouray Ranger District.

The GMUG and Idarado /Newmont Mining finalized the Sampling and Analysis Plan for the Telluride Valley Floor Tailings area as called for in the Administrative Settlement Agreement and Order of Consent.

In the geology program, the GMUG has been participating in many local school programs, teaching elementary school classes about paleontology and fossil resources in and around the Forest.

Fires

In Fiscal Year 2011, the GMUG experienced 23 wildfires that burned a total of 1,061 acres. The Forest also accomplished 6 prescribed burns totalling 2,427 acres for vegetation/fuels reduction, forest restoration and habitat improvement. Forest employees supported multi-jurisdictional fires within the Montrose Interagency Fire Management Unit as well as additional fires on the Grand Valley Ranger District administered out of the Upper Colorado River Fire Management Unit. Additional accomplishments include: completion of annual preparedness reviews; assistance teaching sections of wildfire training; and implementation of the Wildfire Decision Support System.

Travel Management

Travel management implementation continued on the GMUG in FY2011. Gunnison and Paonia Ranger Districts began implementation of the Gunnison National Forest Travel Management Plan, including installing signs, providing





information and making education contacts and creating the Gunnison Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). Implementation is anticipated to take 3-5 years. The Gunnison Ranger District focused on signing and route decommissioning in the Taylor Park North, Spring Creek and Double Top areas, while Paonia Ranger District focused primarily in the Black Mesa area. Travel management activities continued on the Grand Mesa and Uncompahgre National Forests as well. The Norwood Ranger District will be closing some routes in the Telephone Draw area this fall as a result of completing wildlife habitat vegetation improvements in 2009. Motor Vehicle Use Maps are available at all GMUG offices.

Volunteers in 2011

The GMUG National Forest has an active volunteer program. In 2011, numerous projects were completed using volunteers and partners, including campground cleanup and maintenance on the Uncompahgre Plateau, road and trail maintenance across the Forest, snowmobile trail grooming and maintenance, resource monitoring, wildlife habitat projects, Visitor Center interpretive programs, cultural/heritage Partners in Time (PIT) projects and much more.

In 2011, the GMUG hosted volunteer efforts and accomplishments resulting in over 24.3 person years (42,488 hours) of donated time and services that were valued at over \$899,090 (including YCC youth).



Partnerships

The GMUG has approximately 98 active cooperator groups and individuals who contribute over \$1,657,715 toward work on National Forest Lands and programs. Some of our cooperators include: American Forests, Arbor Day Foundation, BackCountry Snowsports Alliance, Bear Ranch BLM, Bureau of Rec, CDOW, Town of Cedaredge, Colorado Fourteeners, Classic Bicycle Racing, Collbran Job Corp, Colorado State Parks, CSU, Delta Correctional Center, Delta County Delata Montrose Electric, Division of Minerals and Mine Safety, City of Grand Junction, Grand Mesa Scenic Byways, Gunnison County, Gunnison Energy Corp, Hinsdale County, HPP, Mesa county, Mesa Youth Services, Montrose County, Town of Mountain Village, Mt. Crested Butte, Mule Deer Foundation, National Wild Turkey Foundation, Northern Ute, Town of Norwood, Ouray County, Ouray County Public Access Group, Ouray Trails Group, Planet Blue Grass, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Roundup Riders of the Rockies, San Miguel County, Southwest Conservation Corp, Telluride Ski Area, Thunder Mountain Wheelers, Trails Preservation Alliance, Trans Colorado, Tri-State, Kinder Morgan, Trust for Land Restoration, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, Uncompahgre/Com, WCIA, Wapa, West Virginia University, Western Land Group, Western State College, Western Slope ATV.



Benefits to Colorado

The GMUG provides millions of dollars to Colorado's economy through multiple sources ranging from mining and energy development to recreation and tourism. Telluride, Crested Butte and Powderhorn ski resorts and several historic districts attract visitors from around the world and throughout Colorado to

the forests. A series of three hut systems as well as three lodges, one marina, two organizational camps, dogsledding, whitewater kayak events, world-class hunting and a variety of festivals all bring visitors and their economic support to the area.

- The Forest Service makes payments to the State that are then distributed to the Counties in which national forest lands lie. These receipts are distributed through the Secure Rural Schools Act and help support roads, schools and environmental protection on County and federal lands. Payments to the GMUG counties for 2010 totalled \$3,590,684.
- Under Title II of the Secure Rural Schools Act, the GMUG Resource Advisory Committee has recommended and the Forest approved 17 projects totalling \$947,737.
- The Federal Government makes payments to units of local government as proxies for property taxes on the land base of federal land managing agencies. Delta, Gunnison, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel Counties received \$ 5,555,604 in Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) for FY 2011. This averages to about \$1.06 per acre. Portions of Hinsdale, Garfield and San Juan Counties are included in the GMUG; however, these PILT payments were not included in these figures.

Awards

Charlie Richmond received the Forest Service Job Corps National Director's Honor Award for National Forest Systems Champion for his efforts toward providing excellent service to the Nation's youth.

Tom Condos, Forest Engineer and Minerals staff officer, was recognized as the "Engineering Manager of the Year" for his leadership, problem-solving skills, collaborative efforts and team work.

Julie Grode, wildlife biologist, received a "Lifetime Achievement in Wildlife Conservation" award citing her outstanding initiative, accomplishments and dedication to wildlife conservation.

Clay Speas forest biology and fisheries program manager was awarded "Forest Fisheries Biologist-of-the-Year" and "Forest Biologist-of-the-Year" for the Rocky Mountain Region. The awards cited his exemplary program management, use of partnerships and achievement of on-the-ground projects and targets.

Matt Dare, fisheries biologist, was awarded "District Fisheries Biologist-of-the-Year" for the Rocky Mountain Region. The award referenced his creative solutions to complex problems, program management and service to RART and other biologists as exemplary.

